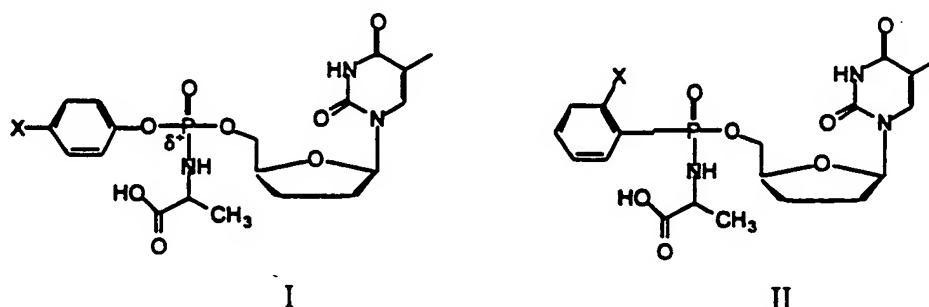


WE CLAIM:

1. A method for inhibiting HIV reverse transcriptase in cells infected with HIV, comprising administering to the infected cells an inhibiting amount of a compound of formula I or II, where X is an electron withdrawing group:

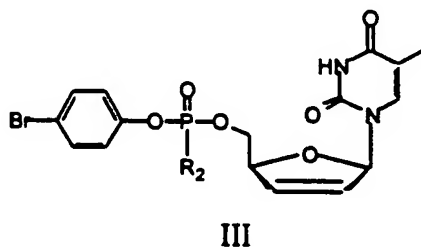


2. The method of claim 1, wherein X is halogen or NO₂.

3. The method of claim 2, wherein X is Br.

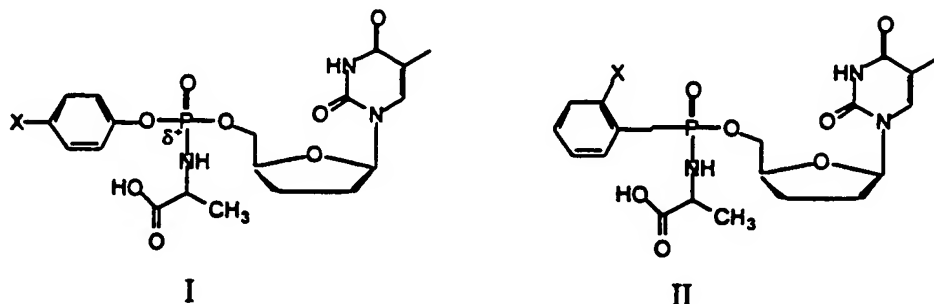
4. The method of claim 3, wherein Br is *para* substituted.

5. A method for inhibiting HIV reverse transcriptase in cells infected with HIV, comprising administering to the infected cells an inhibiting amount of a compound of formula III, where X is an electron withdrawing group, and where R₁ is an amino acid residue:



6. The method of claim 5, wherein R_2 is $-\text{NHCH}(\text{CH}_3)\text{COOCH}_3$.

7. A composition comprising a compound of formula I or II, where X is an electron withdrawing group:

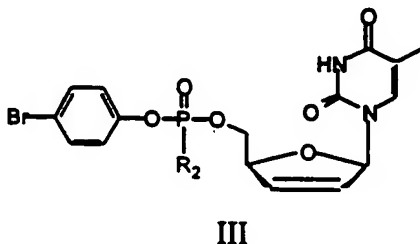


8. The composition of claim 7, wherein X is halogen or NO_2 .

9. The composition of claim 8, wherein X is Br.

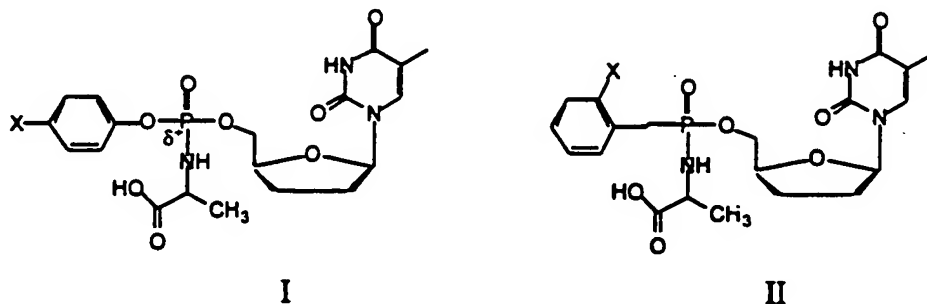
10. The composition of claim 9, wherein Br is *para* substituted.

11. A composition comprising a compound of formula III, wherein R_2 is an amino acid residue:



12. The composition of claim 11, wherein R_2 is $-\text{NHCH}(\text{CH}_3)\text{COOCH}_3$.

13. A method for inhibiting HIV replication in a host cell, comprising contacting the host cell with an inhibiting amount of a compound of formula I or II, where X is an electron withdrawing group:

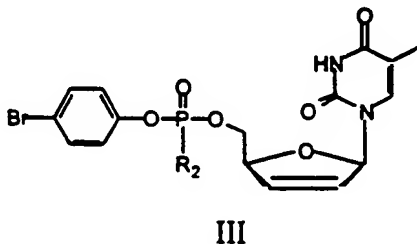


14. The method of claim 13, wherein X is halogen or NO₂.

15. The method of claim 14, wherein X is Br.

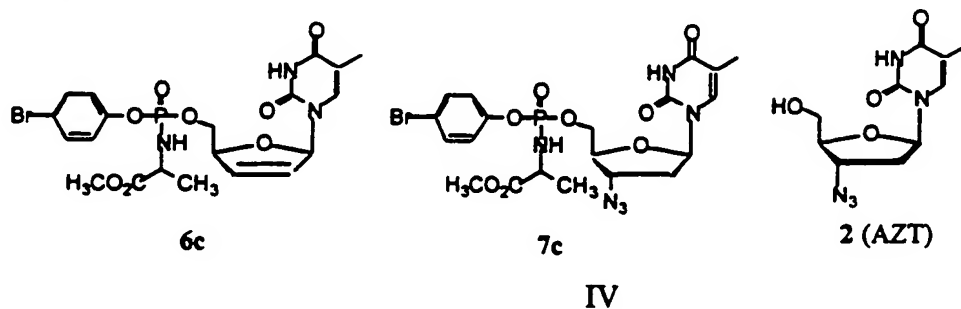
16. The method of claim 15, wherein Br is *para* substituted.

17. A method for inhibiting HIV replication in host cells, comprising administering to the cells an inhibiting amount of a compound of formula III, where X is an electron withdrawing group, and where R₂ is an amino acid residue:



18. The method of claim 5, wherein R₂ is -NHCH(CH₃)COOCH₃.

19. A composition comprising a compound of formula IV where X is an electron-withdrawing group substituted in the *para* or *ortho* position:



20. The composition of claim 19, wherein X is halogen or NO₂.